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UNCLAS E F T O SECTION 01 OF 02 WARSAW 000351

SENSITIVE  
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PLEASE PASS TO H FOR CONGRESSMAN MIKE ROGERS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [OREP](#) [ENRG](#) [MARR](#) [RS](#) [PL](#)  
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR CODEL ROGERS VISIT TO WARSAW,  
APRIL 5-7, 2009

Classified By: DCM Quanrud by reason 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (SBU) Mission Poland warmly welcomes your upcoming visit to Warsaw. Your meetings will occur one day after President Obama meets with the Polish leadership on the margins of the U.S.-EU Summit in Prague, which will likely be with both Prime Minister Donald Tusk and President Lech Kaczynski. The two leaders are putting aside a long-standing rivalry to hold what will be their first joint meeting with a foreign head of state. Though rivals, together they have a good story to tell: Poland is time-tested ally of America and has stood with our soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, supported our efforts in the Former Soviet space, and shares our faith in freedom and democracy. Prime Minister Tusk's government has welcomed President Obama's new emphasis on soft power and outreach to rivals. President Kaczynski is less enthusiastic, but is nevertheless an ardent fan of America. However, in the midst of an otherwise solid bilateral relationship, Poland's ongoing exclusion from the Visa Waiver Program grates badly, and resentment among the population is steadily eroding our popularity here.

¶2. (SBU) The fate of Missile Defense is first and foremost on the minds of Poland's government and public. Last August, Prime Minister Tusk agreed to locate U.S. missile interceptors in Poland under the auspices of a Ballistic Missile Defense Agreement (BMDA). He did so largely to accommodate a direct request from us, their longtime ally. The Poles now patiently await our decision on the future of European Missile Defense. At the same time they are pressing ahead for implementation of our bilateral Strategic Declaration of Cooperation, issued side-by-side with BMDA last summer. The Declaration operates separately from the BMDA and promises U.S. defense modernization aid, a high-level Strategic Dialogue and a Patriot battery rotation starting in 2009 (contingent on ratification of a Supplemental Status of Forces Agreement). The Patriot rotation puts U.S. boots on Polish soil, something Poles think will inherently improve their security situation. The Strategic Dialogue is also important to many here who suspect Eastern Europe has fallen off the U.S. radar.

¶3. (SBU) The Polish Government is being assiduously patient on Missile Defense. It does so in the face of prevalent public concern that Washington might sacrifice Missile Defense on the altar of improved relations with Moscow. For deep-seeded historical reasons, Russian posturing on Missile Defense carries much greater weight in Poland than concerns about the Iranian nuclear threat. If the U.S. decides not to pursue Missile Defense, Poles will be disappointed if it appears the decision was made either over their heads or at Russia's behest. President Kaczynski has warned publicly that a U.S. decision not to pursue Missile Defense, if taken to satisfy Russia, would negatively impact bilateral relations.

¶4. (SBU) On Russia in general, the current government has taken a less-confrontational, more-constructive tack,

recognizing the need for dialogue with Russia, not just to advance common interests, but also to work through difficult issues. This doesn't mean Russia gets a pass, however -- Warsaw will be the first to insist that the EU and NATO press Moscow to play by the rules. The Poles also favor a EUR 600 million Polish-Swedish Eastern Partnership initiative, which seeks to draw countries on Europe's eastern border, especially Ukraine and Georgia, closer to Western institutions. By offering former Soviet republics the prospect of free trade and visa-free travel to the EU, the Eastern Partnership aims to spur reforms needed for eventual EU membership and to bolster their independence.

¶5. (SBU) Given its historically tense relations with Russia, Poland views regional energy dependence on Russian resources as a threat to its sovereignty and to European integration. Unlike many of its neighbors, Poland's reliance on coal somewhat insulates it from the use of energy as an economic weapon. Poland still feels squeezed, however, by dependence on imported Russian gas and by emissions constraints that favor imported gas over domestic coal. The current government is looking to nuclear power, diversification of gas supplies, and European integration as solutions, and seeks stronger EU solidarity on energy security.

¶6. (SBU) Prime Minister Tusk's strong polling numbers (holding above 50 percent) after 16 months in office are virtually unprecedented in post-Communist Polish history. He faces no viable challenge from the opposition, since the left is divided and the main center-right opposition party, Law and Justice (PiS), is widely faulted for harsh tactics and an

WARSAW 00000351 002 OF 002

overly skeptical view of the EU, which has benefited Poland greatly. In contrast to the previous government, Prime Minister Tusk has made mending fences with the EU (especially Germany) a priority. This marks an important shift. His government is overtly more attuned to the EU than to the United States, in part because Poland receives significant inflows of funds from the EU, and because younger Poles are less attached to the United States than their forbears.

¶7. (SBU) Poles are concerned that their contributions in Iraq (2003-2008) and Afghanistan (ongoing) are under-appreciated, but they continue to be solid allies of American. Although defense spending has been cut because of financial crisis-related shortfalls in tax revenues, Poland's commitment to Afghanistan remains steady. Poland currently has 1600 soldiers in Afghanistan and recently assumed sole military responsibility for Ghazni province. A further plus-up of 400 troops is coming. On the downside, Poland remains uncertain about how it will manage the civilian aspects of its Afghan deployment in Ghazni.

¶8. (SBU) Poland's financial system has survived the global crisis relatively unscathed, but it suffers from weakness in its European trade and investment partners. Poland will see some growth this year, albeit barely in the positive range, and with rising unemployment. The government is not pursuing significant economic stimulus, but is working to draw on EU funds that were part of Poland's accession process, at a rate of roughly EUR 10 billion/year for 7 years. They believe that fiscal prudence is shielding Poland from the financial market downturn, and are in tune with other U.S. goals for the London Summit like restraining protectionism, increasing the IMF's resources, and revisiting euro adoption procedures. ASHE